



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/fusion-farming-gains-momentum-among-potato-farmers-kenya>

## Fusion Farming Gains Momentum among Potato Farmers in Kenya



Land O'Lakes International Development

An innovative approach to sustainably increasing potato yields is wowing smallholder farmers in Kenya. Viazi Power, a new seed treatment program developed by local agriculture marketing and distribution company Lachlan Kenya Ltd., is based on the principles of fusion farming, which aims to increase food production while minimizing environmental impact. Viazi Power works through a combination of “bio-control” products and synthetic chemical and bagged fertilizer products, resulting in an environmentally friendly seed treatment that increases yields and crop quality at a sustainable cost while preserving soil quality. Seed treatment can reduce pesticide use since it requires a very small quantity of chemicals.

Through a Feed the Future grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Lachlan was able to pilot this innovation in Kenya’s Bomet and Meru counties. To date, nearly 200 potato farmers have tried out Viazi Power, and the early results have been impressive.

“In many cases, we’ve been able to double yields,” says Richard Stone-Wigg, Lachlan’s founder and chief executive officer. The company plans to distribute the product to more than 11,000 potato growers over the next two years.

Viazi, which means “potato” in Kiswahili, is a staple food for millions and a crop that is vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

“Adverse weather, especially drought, has contributed to farmers losing their drive,” says Martin Mwobobia, Lachlan’s sales manager. “The unpredictable climate often renders their farming efforts worthless.”

But with effective seed treatment, potatoes have a better chance of withstanding heat, drought and other stresses. Kenyan farmers, especially those tending only small plots of land, are enthusiastic about the Viazi Power technology.

Standing among sacks overflowing with hearty white potatoes, Martha Johna, a smallholder farmer in Meru County, says, “Even if you farm only this small plot, it is enough. This supplies a whole shop, and you will never lack customers.”

Lachlan is teaching farmers how to achieve optimal yields using Viazi Power and providing comprehensive field training that covers basics such as planting and fertilizing. To test technical and market viability, the company will also assess the impact, adoption rates, distribution and marketing plans, benefits for farmers and households, and how the approach will function at scale.

USAID Kenya Mission Director Karen Freeman says Lachlan is a great example of how the [Kenya Feed the Future](#)

**Innovation Engine**, which works like a venture capital fund, can deliver technical assistance that complements financial investments. The Innovation Engine is supporting the next generation of innovations for smallholder farmers and others along the agricultural value chain.

“By partnering with entrepreneurs who have promising new concepts, products and services, we can multiply the results we are able to deliver,” says Freeman.

Lachlan is one of 13 innovators selected by the Innovation Engine to receive targeted training and support to test, perfect and scale solutions to poverty and undernutrition. As part of USAID’s effort to promote **local development solutions**, Lachlan was also awarded a direct grant through the Agency’s fixed obligation mechanism.